

CDC Health-e-Cards Requirements and Best Practices

Purpose

This document includes information on the process for creating Health-e-Cards, requirements for the planning and design, and best practices for developing effective cards.

Background

eCards, or electronic greeting cards, are communication tools used to encourage healthy behavior by communicating programs, products, and information to individuals. eCards are popular among consumers. The Greeting Card Association estimates that 500 Million eCards are sent annually. Visitors to CDC.gov sent close to 110,000 Health-e-Cards and over 316,000 eCards have been viewed. For more information please view the CDC eCard Data Brief: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthmarketing/ehm/databriefs/ecardresearch.pdf>). To visit the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Health-e-Card site, please go to: www.cdc.gov/ecards.

User testing was conducted on the CDC Health-e-Cards Web site in September and December 2008. Results showed that participants could successfully use the eCards Web site. Participants spoke positively about the Web site and thought the eCards were a credible source of health information.

CDC encourages the use of eCards to effectively and inexpensively reach individuals with personalized and targeted health information. CDC's Health-e-Cards provide the opportunity for individuals to send a personal message as well as health messages to friends and family. Individuals can then forward the eCard that they have received onto additional family and friends, allowing eCards to spread virally.

Process

How to create a CDC Health-e-Card:

1. Review CDC this document in full.
2. *Contact the Division of E-Health Marketing (DEHM) to review the project and the eCard messages.*
3. Work with Division of Creative Services (DCS) to:
 - a. Develop or identify image for the eCard cover. To view a selection of stock photography images available, go to the http://intra-apps.cdc.gov/createit/createit2/request_job_start.asp?departmentId=1. Select "stock photography" from the left navigation.
 - b. Complete a Create-It service request form - http://intra-apps.cdc.gov/createit/createit2/request_job_start.asp?departmentId=1, Select "Health-e-Cards" from the left navigation.
4. Complete the [CDC Health-e-Card Checklist](#), including:
 - a. Identify the CDC.gov Web page that the eCard will link to.
 - b. Create a 20-character title and Section 508 compliant text (see example) for each eCard.

5. Clear eCard by normal CIO clearance channels.
6. Determine the category type for the eCard from the following:
 - a. Diseases and Conditions (includes topics such as Influenza, Diabetes and Cancer)
 - b. Emergency Preparedness and Response
 - c. Environmental Health (includes Climate Change and Healthy Homes)
 - d. Holidays, Occasional and Seasonal (includes such topics as Back to School, Valentines Day and World Diabetes Day)
 - e. Healthy Living (includes such topics as Women's Health, Nutrition and Vaccinations and Immunizations)
 - f. Injury, Violence and Safety (includes such topics as Child Safety and Safe Driving)
 - g. Traveler's Health
7. Determine an audience designation for the eCard from the following:
 - a. Adults
 - b. Children & Teens
 - c. Healthcare Providers
 - d. Parents
 - e. Pet Owners
 - f. Travelers
 - g. All Types
 - h. Employers
 - i. Home Owners and Renters
 - j. Partners
 - k. Teachers

To maximize exposure, it is recommended that the eCard be listed in more than one category, if applicable. For example, a card focusing on women's heart disease prevention could be in both the Healthy Living/Women's Health and Disease and Conditions/Heart Health categories.

8. Provide cleared eCard to the graphic designer in DCS for posting to the CDC Web site. eCards can be posted to the internet within 48-hours of final clearance.

If you are working on a special eCard project or need assistance, please contact NCHM Interactive Media (NCHMInteractiveMedia@cdc.gov).

Clearance

All eCards must be cleared through your normal Center or Office clearance channels.

Planning Requirements

To use resources effectively, the following issues should be determined by your group before starting the development process:

1. Objectives

It is important to have clearly defined objectives before beginning development on your eCard. Do you want to highlight content, spark action, or encourage awareness

of an issue? Clearly defined objectives for an eCard project can help in creating text for the cover and inside of the card as well as choosing images.

It will also assist in determining the best Web page to link to from the inside of the card. For example, many CDC.gov home page features (health & safety features and/or data & stats features) link to an eCard. The link helps drive traffic to the feature page and to deeper CDC content pages. All links should go to a CDC.gov page.

2. Target Audience(s):

As with any communications activity, it is important to define your intended target audience(s) in order to develop and communicate messages and graphics that resonate with your audience and prompt them to take action.

For the most part, Health-e-Cards will target members of the general public, although, there may be some instances when healthcare providers, public health professionals or other audiences are targeted. For example, one of the more popular flu prevention Health-e-Cards targeted healthcare professionals to encourage flu vaccination.

There are two audiences to consider when developing eCards—the sender and the recipient. All cards should contain messaging and images considered appropriate for sending and receiving by friends, family members or colleagues.

Greeting cards are meant to be sent to a wide range of people. For example, the pregnancy eCard, (see example) was created using one image for a card that can be sent to a variety of pregnant women.

The Division of Creative Services can provide artistic help with creating images or items such as baby clothes can be used to create a graphical image that represents all target audiences.

3. eCard Decisions

While you may not know all the answers in the planning stage, it helps to discuss the following:

- a. What design aspects are important to include?
- b. Do you plan to use animation, audio, or translation services?
- c. What content will you be linking to?
- d. Do you need to develop messaging or content, and if so, how long will it take to clear?
- e. How will you promote the cards?

- f. How long will the eCard be available? A longer 'shelf-life' is recommended. For a time-specific promotion, consider making the eCard delivery time-specific but the eCard itself general. For example, creating an eCard to focus on Heart Health can be sent out for World Heart Day in September and for American Heart Month in February.
4. Design and Usability
All eCards must follow HHS and CDC guidelines for good design and usability, with special attention to the following:
 - a. Images and content on both the front and inside of the card should be:
 - attractive,
 - engaging,
 - modern, and
 - easy to read.
 - b. The design on the front of the card should encourage the viewer to open the card, read the inside and click on the link to additional content.
 - c. The inside of the card should contain a light background with dark text, in some cases; it is desirable to add light graphics on the inside of the card and to carry the theme from the front to the inside of the card.

For additional information, please see:

http://intranet.cdc.gov/cdcweb/regs_bestpractices/guidance_standards.htm (not accessible outside the CDC network).

5. Content

The text within an eCard should be short and simple and include a link to more information that is available on the CDC.gov Web site.

- a. Text on the front of the card should be minimal and easy to read.
- b. There should be a maximum of three lines of text on the inside of the eCard. (we recommend 75 characters of text in 24 point Arial font or equivalent in Georgia, Helvetica, Trebuchet or Verdana. The character limit will vary by font type.)
- c. The eCard template (see example) is based on the standard Arial font, 24 point.

All text should be positive and encourage the viewer to take action or visit the CDC Web site for more information.

All eCards should have a URL on the inside of the card to direct content for more information on the CDC.gov Web site.

- Generally, we prefer to link to specific, targeted content and short, concise textual name for the link (one line).
- The eCard system only allows for two links inside the card. One should be a call to action. The other can be used to direct traffic to CDC.gov or another Web site such as flu.gov.
- Occasionally, a simple-text URL can be used instead of a written description.

- The standard font and size for the URL is Arial, 18 point. (The URL should not exceed 60 characters of text in 18 point Arial font or equivalent in Georgia, Helvetica, Trebuchet or Verdana. The character limit will vary by font type.)
 - Add Omniture codes to measure click through link to CDC.gov.
6. Branding
- All eCards will be branded with the CDC.gov, CDC and HHS logos. Additional logos may also be incorporated with prior approval from DeHM leadership and the Associate Director of Communication Science at your Center of Office. This required branding should be on the inside of the card (see example), and is already included in the eCard template.
7. Labeling
- All CDC eCards should be referred to as CDC Health-e-Cards on the Internet. In talking about eCards in general, the standardized term is 'eCards' or 'eCard'.
8. File Type and Size Requirements – this information is provided for individuals not developing eCards with DCS.
- Standard eCard size - 470 pixels wide by 264 pixels high.
 - Screen resolution – 72 dpi.
 - The images need to be in JPG format and the eCard file needs to be in Flash (.swf).
 - The font and size for text on the inside of the eCard is Arial, 24 point. The link text should be in Arial, 18 point. (The text size should not exceed 75 characters (Arial 24-point) for the inside of the eCard and 60 characters of text (Arial 18-point) or equivalent in Georgia, Helvetica, Trebuchet or Verdana. The character limit will vary by font type.)

If the eCard will be linked from a CDC.gov feature page, also include a JPG of the eCard front at 150 pixels x 86 pixels x 72 dpi.

9. Section 508 Compliance and Captions
- All CDC Health-e-Cards must be Section 508-compliant in order to make electronic information accessible to persons with disabilities. A caption must be written describing all graphical images and all of the text on both the front and the inside of the card. If possible, the captions should not be longer than 500 characters, including spaces (see example).
- For additional information about Section 508, please see:
<http://intranet.cdc.gov/cdcweb/usability/508/> (not accessible outside the CDC network.)

10. Categories/Topics

On the CDC.gov eCard site, all eCards are organized topically (refer to Process Steps on page 1 of this document). DeHM will make final decisions about the categorization on the CDC.gov site.

11. Title

All cards need a unique title no greater than 20 characters, including spaces. The title should grab the attention of your audience and accurately describe the content of the card. If multiple eCards are created for the same topic, each card will need a unique 20-character title. Do not use numbers to designate titles. Assistance is available if needed.

12. Other Considerations

To prevent possible security vulnerabilities that may be introduced during Flash, all eCards are subject to vulnerability scanning and code review before being deployed into production.

Best Practices

1. Shelf Life

It is not recommended to create eCards for a one or two day event. An exception is allowed for federally recognized holidays. A suggested alternative is to create eCards for campaigns or to highlight content with a shelf life of at least one month. For example, instead of creating an eCard for National Influenza Vaccination Week, we recommend creating one for flu prevention which can be sent from early November through February.

All cards created for holidays, observation days and seasonal events may be taken down from the eCard Web page as soon as the event is over. Likewise, all evergreen cards must be reviewed annually for content accuracy, per HHS content standards.

2. Timeline to Create eCards

With cleared content, it generally takes a minimum of two weeks to create a standard photo eCard.

3. Animation

- Any animation used should be purposeful, thoughtful and compliment the intended message.
- Animation options include the automatic start or the selection of the play button by the user.
- DCS can provide expertise with animation.
- Use of standard buttons and icons is required.
- All animation needs to be properly described in the 508 captions.
- All eCard animation should be shorter than 1-minute.

4. Audio

- a. Any music selected should be purposeful, thoughtful and compliment the intended message.
- b. All music selected must be copyright free. Contact DCS for additional guidance and to review selection from their catalog.
- c. All audio with words must be captioned.
- d. All audio needs to be properly described in the 508 captions.
- e. Use of standard buttons and icons is required.
- f. All eCard audio should be shorter than 1-minute.

5. Translation

eCards can be translated into other languages when appropriate and related, previously-translated content already exists to link to. Additional time will be added to the production schedule to translate cleared cards. Please contact please contact NCHMInteractiveMedia@cdc.gov for additional assistance.

6. Promotion

Promoting Health-e-Cards is strongly recommended. Here are some tips for promotion:

- a. Include on your CDC homepage and secondary features.
- b. Include a thumbnail and link on high-profile topic-specific pages.
- c. Include a thumbnail and link in campaign materials.
- d. Send content-specific GovDelivery email updates.
- e. Send eCards or emails to partners and grantees (If you would like to send the eCards to more than five people at a time, please contact DeHM and we can assist in this. We will need the “sender name”, the personal message, and the email addresses separated by commas.)
- f. Utilize the GovDelivery system to send out e-mail updates
- g. Utilize CDC eHealth and other Twitter accounts. Contact DeHM for additional assistance.

For other ideas on how to incorporate Health-e-Cards into eHealth promotions, please contact NCHMInteractiveMedia@cdc.gov.

7. Evaluation

All efforts should be evaluated to review the metrics, define the lessons learned, and determine whether the effort successfully met project goals. DeHM is able to provide the numbers of times each eCard has been sent and viewed. Additional metrics can be captured via Omniture SiteCatalyst.

Social Media Guidelines and Best Practices

Examples

Title of eCard (20 Characters):
Pregnancy – Congrats

CDC Health-e-Card Example (cover):



CDC Health-e-Card Example (inside):



Section 508 Compliant Text (500 Characters):

Front: Graphic of baby clothes and a blanket. Text: Congratulations on your Pregnancy! Inside: You are going to be a wonderful mother! Staying healthy during your pregnancy gives your baby a healthy start in life! Information on Healthy Pregnancy: http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/pregnancy_gateway/now.htm

Social Media Guidelines and Best Practices



eCard Checklist: This checklist must be completed prior to beginning an eCard project.

CDC Health-e-Card Checklist

Name:

Phone:

Email:

CIO:

- ☐ Cover

Description of Image / File Name / Juniper Image URL:

- ☐ Title text (20 characters max):

- ☐ Cover Text:

- ☐ Inside of eCard

Text (Arial, 24 point 75 characters maximum, or equivalent in Georgia, Helvetica, Trebuchet or Verdana):

Branding Bar ☐

- ☐ Link to CDC.gov content (Arial, 18 point, 60 characters maximum, or equivalent in Georgia, Helvetica, Trebuchet or Verdana):

- ☐ Proposed Date for Release:

- ☐ eCard Category:

- ☐ 508 Compliance Caption:

- ☐ Cleared by:

- ☐ Zipped Folder with two subfolders inside

Title of eCard is the name of the folder

Subfolder is called Large

Subfolder is called Thumbnails

- ☐ Images (3 sizes in jpg format), all with same name

Thumbnail: 150x84 (In the thumbnail subfolder)

Flash Graphic: 470x264

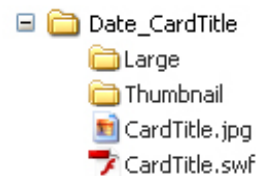
Large: 580x400 (in the large subfolder)

- ☐ Flash File (.swf format) in the zipped folder

- ☐ File Size

Outside of card (35K max):

Inside of card (35K max):



When completed, please send NCHM Interactive Media

NCHMinteractivemedia@cdc.gov

